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# FERDINANDO GORGES AND NEW ENGLAND





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by

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*Two Shillings and Sixpence*



Sir Ferdinando Gorges was born at his family's town house in Clerkenwell, probably in 1565. One of his ancestors came over to England from Normandy with the Conqueror or shortly afterwards. During the Middle Ages the Gorges were connected with some of the noblest families in England and in the sixteenth century they reached their zenith. Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, the two Queens whom Henry VIII beheaded, were second cousins of Edward Gorges, and Queen Elizabeth was thus a third cousin of his son, Ferdinando. The tomb of his ancestor who married Lady Anne Howard is in Wraxall Church.

He was brought up at one of the family seats of his widely ramifying family. Wraxall Court and Nailsea Court near Bristol, have both been mentioned; certainly, it seems clear that as a boy he lived in the neighbourhood of Bristol. Of his education little or nothing is known, except that it is said to have been a sound one. There is a tradition that like his brother he went up to Oxford, but for some reason unknown he did not take his degree. Judging by his later life the principles of Protestantism were firmly planted in him. On his father's death he inherited £100, a gold chain and the manor of Birdcombe, Nr. Wraxall, with its lands scattered through the parishes of Wraxall, Nailsea, Tickenham and Portishead. The manor house, a fine four-storey porchtower mansion, some parts of which date back to the thirteenth century, still stands.

Gorges grew up in that stirring period of English history before the Armada when hatred of Spain was mounting. He was a boy of 15 when Drake returned in 1580 from his successful circumnavigation of the world with a cargo of Spanish loot. Gorges must have been well acquainted with the daring projects of his kinsmen, Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Humphrey Gilbert, to plant colonies in the New World. As the Spanish menace grew, his zeal for the Protestant cause was stimulated. All of these things, together with his unpromising prospects as a younger son, impelled him to adopt the profession of arms at the age of 19. He therefore joined his countrymen in Holland who were at that time aiding their fellow Protestants in their desperate struggle with Spain. When the Armada came he was still on foreign service.

In the Dutch wars he acquitted himself with distinction and in 1590 he joined the English under the command of the Earl of Essex. That nobleman was so impressed by the young soldier's qualities that he knighted him at the siege of Rouen where Gorges was wounded. Indeed his services were so outstanding in the Huguenot cause that Henry IV recommended him to Queen Elizabeth for promotion as a

"very sufficient gentleman who hath gained very great reputation for his valour and conduct in war." (1)

On his return to England, he was elected Member of Parliament for Cardiganshire in 1593. This, it appears, was mainly due to the influence of Essex. Two years later his benefactor also helped to obtain for him the command of Plymouth Fort, a place of the highest importance in the defence system of the kingdom. The fact that Gorges was entrusted with this command is a measure of the high regard in which he was held by the Queen and her counsellors. While putting Plymouth into an appropriate state of defence, Gorges had time to organise privateering expeditions to prey upon Spanish trade, an activity which he hoped would supplement his limited resources. During the closing years of the century, he remained in Plymouth confidently awaiting the attack of the enemy —

"God and St. George," he wrote in a letter to his kinsman, Raleigh, "let them come an they dare" — (2)

but they never came.

Sir Ferdinando was implicated with Essex, though he took no active part in the plot. His chief concern, it appears, was his wish to turn his friend away from the dangerous paths into which he was being led by his irresponsible supporters. Raleigh besought Gorges to break with the Earl, but his loyalty to the man who had been so helpful to him in the past was too strong, and in consequence he narrowly escaped the scaffold. He was deprived of his Plymouth command and for the rest of the old Queen's reign he lived in penurious disgrace in Charlton House, near Wraxall Court, dependent upon the charity of his relatives. (3)

Fortunately for him, Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 and in September of that same year King James pardoned him and restored him to his Plymouth command. In a warrant signed at Woodstock, it is stated that

"for some displeasure conceived by the Queen our sister deceased . . . Sir Ferdinando Gorges was removed

(1) Preston, R. A., *Gorges of Plymouth Fort*, p.40.

(2) *Ibid.* p.67.

(3) *Ibid.* p.121.

from the charge of the new fort at Plymouth and of St. Nicholas Island and the same committed to Sir John Gilbert. And that since our coming to the Crown the said Sir Ferdinando Gorges hath given such satisfaction in the former matters, as we have been moved to restore him to that charge . . . . . and have granted to the said Sir Ferdinando Gorges our letters patent of the charge." (1)

This happy change of fortune was largely due to the intervention of Cecil, to whose family interests he was henceforward devoted.

Like many of his contemporaries, Gorges viewed the conclusion of peace with Spain in 1604 with dismay. The peace-time command of a fort which no longer had any particular significance and which offered him little prospect of promotion, was far from attractive. The peace was premature, he thought, and he prayed that England would not come to repent her too soon conclusion of peace which barred Englishmen from the free use of the sea and land. No reference was made in the treaty to Spain's preposterous claim that the whole of North America belonged to her, and it therefore might be assumed that all English ships which went there were little better than pirates. Gorges was a true Elizabethan and did not at first realise the change that had come about with the accession of the new King. He thought that he would be allowed to continue his privateering activities in peace, just as so many of his friends had done during the reign of Elizabeth prior to the formal declaration of war. He therefore asked for letters of marque which would enable him to protect English ships that resorted to the North American coast to trade. His request was refused.

Gorges was now 39 years old, in the full vigour of middle age, but he was too old to take up the career of a soldier of fortune and so his mind turned towards colonization.

"Some there were," he knew, "who believed it better became them to put in practice the reviving resolution of those free spirits that rather chose to spend themselves in seeking a new world than servilely to be hired out as slaughterers in the quarrels of strangers. This resolution being stronger than the means to put it into execution, they were forced to let it rest as a dream, till God should give the means to stir up the inclination of such a power able to bring it into life." (2)

This was not as great a breach with his past as it might appear. Since boyhood he had been familiar with the designs of Bristol

(1) Preston, *op.cit.*, p.123.

(2) Latimer, J., *Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century*, p.27.

merchants to develop trade with North America. As already suggested he must have been well acquainted with the colonizing activities of his kinsmen Raleigh and Gilbert. Moreover, it is probable that he met the younger Hakluyt, Prebendary of Bristol, the most enthusiastic advocate of colonization then in England. This man was unwearying in his efforts to arouse the merchants of Bristol to take a hand in this great work. Sir John Popham, when Recorder of Bristol, must also have listened at some time or other to Hakluyt and it is possible that their Bristol association first brought Sir John and the young Gorges together. Though this is mere conjecture, it is reasonable to think that such meetings took place.

The turn of the century witnessed a revival of the interest of Englishmen in overseas expansion, an interest which the peace with Spain served to strengthen. The merchants of Bristol were now ready to consider the possibility of trade developments with the New World and provided the King would support them they were ready to share in the work of colonization. On the whole, however, they were concerned with trade for they were merchants. They looked upon each voyage, therefore, as a separate venture which should be wound up at its conclusion. A permanent joint stock company, with a continuing stock, did not yet exist.

Meanwhile, in 1602, Robert Salterne of Bristol sailed from Weymouth with Bartholomew Gosnold to explore Virginia, a term which at that time vaguely applied to the greater part of the East coast of North America. This expedition was financed by the Earl of Southampton. Salterne brought back such encouraging reports to Bristol that in the following year, stimulated, no doubt, by the unceasing persuasions of Hakluyt, a ship was sent by Whitson, Aldworth and other Bristol merchants under the command of Captain Martin Pring, to explore the northern parts of Virginia. On this occasion, the chief object was the discovery of new fishing grounds, for Bristolians wanted to develop this trade still further.

Pring made landfall in the neighbourhood of Fox Island at the mouth of the Penobscot River. From there he sailed down the coast and across what was later called Massachusetts Bay and anchored in a small cove. This he named Whitson Bay, but it was later to become famous as Plymouth Harbour where the *Mayflower* arrived with the Pilgrim Fathers in December 1620. Pring explored the neighbouring country which pleased him greatly and he named one of the hills Mount Aldworth. During his two months stay there, he planted wheat, rye and various vegetables which he declared did very well. Altogether he was much impressed by the nature of the country and its possibilities as the scene of future colonization.

Unquestionably Gorges must have heard of Pring's voyage from his friends and relations in and about Bristol. The expedition of Weymouth in 1605, in the organisation of which Gorges took a part, was sent in search of the North West Passage but it resulted only in more exploration of the region that Pring had visited. This in turn still further increased public interest in that part of North America. Weymouth brought back five Indians with him, three of whom he gave to Gorges on his arrival in Plymouth.

"And so it pleased our great God there happened to come into the harbour of Plymouth, (July, 1605) where I then commanded, one Captain Waymouth that had been employed by the Lord Arundel of Wardour for the discovery of the north-west passage . . . . This accident must be acknowledged the means under God of putting on foot and giving life to all our plantations." (1)

For the remainder of Gorges' life colonization was his principal passion. He faithfully discharged his professional duties as a military officer, but the establishment of English settlements in the New World was never absent from his mind. Even the money that came to him with the dowries of his wives was squandered in this great cause.

Gorges and Chief Justice Popham, though their names do not appear in the list of promoters of the Plymouth and London Companies, were mainly responsible for the second voyage made by Pring to New England in 1606. On this occasion they fitted out and dispatched two ships from Bristol to carry on more extensive explorations in the region which Pring had visited in 1603. They found little support among the merchants of Bristol, however, who

"were all of opinion not to adventure anything in that scheme unless the King undertakes to join in the charge and then they will be contributory in some reasonable proportion." (2)

Though Thomas Hanham was the commander, the real leader was Martin Pring. Gorges' ship was captured by the Spaniards but her consort returned safely to Bristol with

"the most exact discovery of that coast that ever came into my hands, and indeed he was the best able to perform it of any I met withal to the present, which with his relation of the country, wrought such an impression on the Lord Chief Justice and us all that were his associates, that (notwithstanding our first disaster) we set up our resolutions to follow it with effect." (3)

(1) Latimer, J., *op.cit.*, p.27.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Gorges, Sir F., *Brief Narration*.

Though Gorges was not a chief promoter of the expedition sent out by Popham and his friends in 1607, carrying emigrants and supplies to establish a colony, he was financially interested. In the following year, two ships *Mary* and *John* laden with supplies, arms, instruments and tools, were sent out to the new colony. On their arrival, however, it was found that the Governor, George Popham, had died and his second-in-command, Gilbert, was compelled to return to England to claim his estate on the death of his brother. There was no other possible leader and as no precious metals had been found and the rigours of the hard winter had been exaggerated by the loss of all the equipment through the destruction of the stores by fire, none of the colonists were willing to remain. They all, therefore, came home in the supply ship and a pinnace which they had built during the winter.

This failure of the Sagadahoc colony in which Gorges had placed his hopes and invested money was a

“wonderful discouragement to all the first undertakers, in so much as there was no more speech of settling in any other plantation in those parts for a long time after . . . . All our former hopes were frozen to death.” (1)

The hard-luck stories of the returning emigrants branded the colony as being too cold for habitation by Englishmen. According to John Smith most people had come to regard New England as a cold, barren, mountainous, rocky desert from which the planters had been driven by “extreme extremities.” (2)

For some years after that, Gorges ceased to have any direct interest in the country which John Smith later called New England. When in 1611, however, Harlow, commander of a ship sent out by the Earl of Southampton, presented Sir Ferdinando with an Indian from Martha’s Vineyard, his interest in it revived. A year before, the merchants of Bristol, led by Guy, had become deeply involved in another colony. The Newfoundland Company’s patent was granted on the 2nd May, 1610, to Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, Sir Francis Bacon and forty-six others, including John Guy of Bristol, his brother Philip, Thomas Aldworth and eight other Bristol merchants. The new body was styled “The Treasurer and Company of Adventurers and Planters of the Cities of London and Bristol for the Colony or plantation in Newfoundland.” The subsequent history of this body, however, does not concern the present essay, except in so far as it made the merchants of Bristol still more disinclined to embark upon economically dubious colonising adventures. They were eager enough

(1) Gorges, Sir F., *op.cit.*, p.23.

(2) Preston, R. A., *op.cit.*, p.150.

to invest their money in an established trade or to develop new ones, provided there was a reasonable promise of a good and regular profit, but appeals to venture their substance in colonising schemes for the glory of their country left them cold.

Everyone was aware that the Virginia Company was far from successful, even though that colony itself, thanks to tobacco, was slowly moving toward prosperity. Gorges did not share these depressing opinions and tended to regard those who held them with contempt. He was not convinced that conditions in New England were as bad as the disgruntled returning settlers had reported in 1608. His good opinion was confirmed by John Smith and others when they went out to New England and remained there for a period of months. Smith contended that because the season in New England opened earlier than in Newfoundland, the fish could be brought to market sooner. Furthermore, as the New England fisheries were closer inshore than those of Newfoundland, the fishing industry could more easily be carried on from the land. Thus, ships laden with emigrants and supplies could return with cargoes of fish.

Smith's recommendations convinced Gorges, and thus in petitioning for the New England patent in 1620 he linked fisheries with colonization. In this he anticipated Gibbon Wakefield, the colonizer of South Australia and New Zealand, two centuries later, but whereas the latter looked to land sales to furnish him with the funds required to cover the cost of establishing a colony, Gorges relied on the sale of fish. Indeed, it was high time that something should be done to substantiate England's claim to New England, for despite all the efforts that had been hitherto made, no permanent English settlement was as yet established there. Gorges was confident that King James would look far more favourably on a colony erected upon a flourishing fishing industry than on one built on smoke.

Other foreign nations were beginning to turn their eyes to New England. For the moment the French had been driven from its coast, but they might return. Though Argol had destroyed Port Royal in Nova Scotia some years earlier, the French were still there and they were firmly established on the St. Lawrence. The Dutch were now active in the Hudson River area, and were shortly to establish a colony on Manhattan Island. There was also the fear that the old enemy Spain might decide to stake out a claim to this now desirable country.

The patent for the New England Council was sealed on the 20th November, 1620. Full powers of development, administration, justice, government, extensive trading privileges, rights and ownership of land were all granted to Gorges and his associates. The

new company was to have jurisdiction over the vast territory lying between the 40th and 48th degrees of north latitude and extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This region included the whole country between Philadelphia and North California on the south and extending from the tip of Newfoundland to the southern part of Vancouver Island on the north. It therefore infringed the rights granted to the Newfoundland Company, as well as those subsequently bestowed upon the Knights Baronets of Nova Scotia. It also included the territory claimed by the French on the St. Lawrence. Thus it was plain that if the new body ever attempted seriously to assert its rights over this great tract there was certain to be trouble, but Gorges appears to have had no conception of the task which he and his friends had thus assumed, nor of the rights which their patent infringed. It was also evident that he had little appreciation of the cost which the implementation of his plans would involve.

While seeking the patent, the promoters made no attempt to raise capital. It was apparently assumed that by requiring the forty patentees to pay down £100 each the venture would otherwise take care of itself. For the most part, the Company was to subsist on returns from the sale of lands and from licences to fish. The original patentees were all noblemen, knights and gentlemen, but later it was stated that merchants would be welcome as members. As the success of the scheme depended largely on the willing co-operation of Bristol and the western outports, it should have been clear to Gorges and to his friends that these business communities should be won over beforehand. The lack of sound financial backing, coupled with the absence of business experience and the suspicions of the merchants of the West ensured the Company's failure from the beginning.

In December of that same year, 1620, the *Mayflower* landed the Pilgrim Fathers at New Plymouth, and so the first permanent English colony in New England was founded. Originally, the Pilgrims sailed from England avowedly in order to settle in some part of the territory claimed by the Virginia Company, but New Plymouth was in the country recently granted to the New England Council. Whether this change of plan was carried through with or without Gorges' connivance is not known.

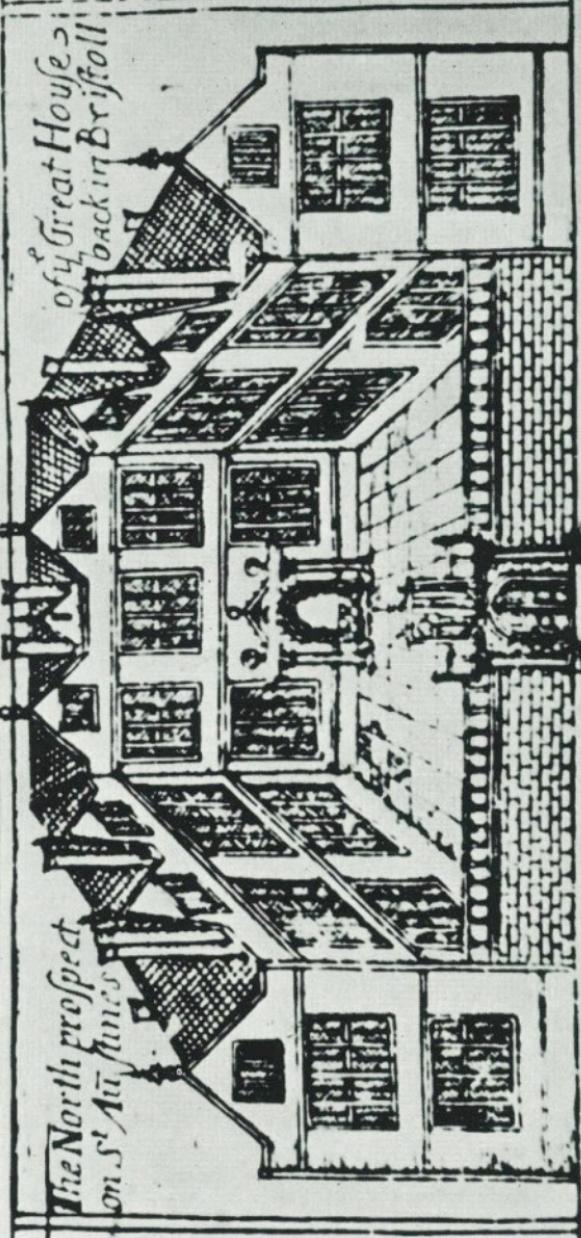
The inglorious history of the New England Council concerns the present pamphlet only in so far as it affected the relations between Gorges and Bristol. It was most unfortunate for him that this far-reaching grant should have been made at a time when the royal abuse of granting monopolies had already aroused the anger of the nation. Among various other grievances the Parliament of 1621 raised the question of the New England



Elizabeth Gorges, eldest daughter of Sir Thomas Gorges and Helena, Marchioness of Northampton. She married Sir Hugh Smyth of Ashton Court, near Bristol, and after his death she married Sir Ferdinando Gorges.

*By kind permission of General Tremlett.*

Lady Gorges' Great House, in  
Temperance Lane, Bristol, L. 1  
D. 1700. Adorned with  
Augustine's South Indian ornament.



The Great House, St. Augustine's Back, Bristol, in which Sir Ferdinand Gorges resided after his marriage to Lady Elizabeth Smyth.

patent. The Virginia Company and the Newfoundland Company, led by Guy of Bristol and the fishermen of the western outports, combined to attack the new body. When the Privy Council enquired from them why the Newfoundland fisheries had fallen into decay and why there was such a shortage of specie in England, they replied that this was due, among other reasons, to the monopoly of fishing rights granted to the New England Council.

Bristol had no hesitation in taking a leading part in this outcry, even though her merchants had been given similar rights in the Newfoundland Company's charter. Indeed, Guy and his colleagues had done their utmost to enforce their rights against interlopers, but they did not relish the same medicine when administered by others to themselves. They scoffed at Gorges' declaration that the Council was ready to allow them to fish in New England waters by courtesy, provided they paid the stipulated licence fees. These, the representatives of the outports declared, were exorbitant. When later, however, Gorges explained to the Merchant Venturers that the exaction of one-tenth of the cargo of each ship brought home was only intended to apply to the earlier voyages in order to launch the colony, and when he agreed that the normal licence should be at the rate of £5 for every thirty tons of a ship's burden some of the merchants were prepared to accept this charge. In view of the large profits which could be made on a cargo of fish this was not unreasonable. Nothing, however, would satisfy the majority of the Bristol Merchant Venturers and the traders of the other outports but the complete abolition of the Council's restrictive rights over the New England fisheries. If, however, Gorges' colonization plans were to be carried into effect, it was impossible for him to agree to so drastic a change. As has been shown, it was the intention of the Council that it should derive the funds required to pay the cost of settlement and supplies, as well as defraying the expense of defence and government, from this source. Parliament, however, was determined, and so in May 1621, a Bill was introduced which provided for the total abolition of these hated privileges. Despite the strenuous opposition of the Council for New England to this measure, the representatives of both Bristol and the outports were well on the way to winning the day, when James dissolved Parliament at the beginning of 1622.

As Parliament did not meet again until 1624, Gorges and the Council for New England were given a respite. Moreover, the Council's position was also to some extent strengthened by the fact that although Bristol and the outports were united in their opposition to it, they were united in little else. They were jealous and suspicious of each other and hated London. But

as the success of the New England venture largely depended on the goodwill and loyal support of the outports these divisions and suspicions also provided additional reasons for the failure of this ill-starred Company. The result was that the advantage gained by the dissolution of Parliament in 1621 was lost.

It was Gorges' intention that while the Council should be responsible for government, defence and the cost of colonization, the outports should develop the fisheries and thus provide necessary funds. But Bristol and her consorts decided to ignore the Council's claims, which indeed that body was unable to enforce. West country ships continued to fish in New England waters and their captains ignored the Council's rights. Though Gorges and his friends resisted these abuses to their utmost by attempting to prevent ships from sailing for New England without the Council's licence, and though they complained bitterly to the Privy Council, nothing effective was done.

Gorges' proposals for the government of the colony were generous. As a true Elizabethan he believed that the best possible of all possible governments was the kind that had flourished under the old Queen. The authority of the crown was to be preserved, but at the same time the right of the people to speak through their representatives was recognised. Thus, while there were to be officials with high-sounding names in the new colony, the people were to elect their own representatives to speak for them in the Colonial Assembly. In those days when bigotry and rancour dominated both the country and Parliament, no such reasonable system of government was possible. The story of the controversy between Bristol and the Council for New England is recorded in ten documents contained in the Bristol *Book of Trade*, to which some reference must now be made. (1)

At the request of the patentees, who were anxious to impress upon all possible interlopers the serious nature of their authority, and the fact that they had the support of the Government behind them, the Privy Council, on 18th September, 1621, wrote to the Mayors of Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth and other West Country towns —

"concerning the restraint of trade to the Country of New England without the approbation of the President and Counsell (2)

of New England. This letter states that although membership of the Company was open to all who were interested in the trade, or in the development of New England, some persons had refused

(1) *The Book of Trade* is in the records of the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol in the Merchants' House, Clifton, Bristol.

(2) Records of the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol: *Book of Trade*, fol.104.

to co-operate, and, against the terms of the Royal Patent, still continued to trade. This the Privy Council was determined to stop, since such practices were prejudicial to the interests of the adventurers who, it was declared, though without foundation, had risked their money and the lives of their people in the venture. If continued, such actions would bring the whole scheme into confusion. The Mayors were, therefore, to understand, and to make it understood by others, that any person who presumed to act contrary to the royal will in this matter would be punished in such a manner as

"is fitt to be inflicted upon those that shall contemne  
His Majesties Royall auctoritie." (1)

As a final warning to both the Virginia Company and the New England Company, the Privy Council ordered each of them to respect the privileges and rights of the other.

This letter was duly transmitted by Sir Ferdinando Gorges to the Mayor of Bristol, who in turn forwarded it to the Society of Merchant Venturers as being the body most likely to be concerned. The Mayor also sent on to the Society another document which he received from Sir Ferdinando on the same day. This was entitled "Articles and orders Concluded on by the President and Counsell for the affaires of New England for the better Government of the trade and advancement of the Plantacon in those parts." This is a long and quaint document of thirty articles which make strange reading at the present time. It was evidently intended that the Company should act mainly in a supervisory and presumably profit-collecting capacity. The actual work of colonization and trade was to be entrusted to quasi-subsidiary companies in Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Dartmouth, Weymouth and Barnstaple, whose corporate activities were to be conducted under a highly-complicated and quite unworkable constitution. (2)

The outport Companies were each to have their full quota of officials, and as has been said, a large measure of autonomy. Representatives from each of these bodies were to meet at Tiverton twice a year when questions of overlapping rights and other problems could be cleared up, but it is difficult to believe that Gorges could think that the rivalries between these ports could be so easily settled.

Great care was taken to safeguard the over-riding authority of the President and Council for New England. Several articles describe the methods by which that body proposed to maintain a check on the actions of the captains of ships, the settlers and the merchants of the various towns, individually and collectively,

(1) *Book of Trade*, fol.104.

(2) *Ibid.* fol.108.

as well as upon the amorphous amalgam which they jointly comprised. Intermingled with this quite impracticable constitution and elaborate system of checks, several other commonplace but more reasonable items appear, which relate to the encouragement of emigrants, the investment of capital and the introduction into the new colony of useful domestic creatures. Article 24, for example says: —

“ . . . it is further ordered that evy shipp of threescore tons shall carry wth them twoe piggs, twoe calves, twoe couple of tame Rabbetts, twoe Couple of hens, and a cocke wch they shall deliv at the Island of Menethiggen.” (1)

Shortly after the presentation of this remarkable document to the Merchant Venturers, Gorges had a personal conference with some of the members of that body, and it was then he informed these men of the terms upon which the President and Council for New England would be willing to grant licences to individual merchants to fish in the coast waters of the territories under their control. The merchants, for their part, undertook to consider this subject, and to communicate their opinions upon it to Gorges. It is apparent, however, that they were in no particular hurry to take further action, for on 12th October, Gorges wrote once more to the Mayor of Bristol. He complained somewhat truculently that, in spite of the great efforts which he had made in order that Bristol should share in the great undertaking, the merchants had so far failed to answer his letter or to make any comment on the articles left with some of them. If they thought that he was working in the matter for his own and not the public's good —

“ I Canne sooner p'don their errors that are guiltye of that Cryme, then tell howe to reforme their natures. In a word I desire of you to give mee acknowledgement under yor hand that you have receyved the letter, and that the marchants have taken notice of the orders thereby expressed the wch I desire you to send mee by this bearer whome I have caused to attend you on purpose for it.” (2)

The merchants, however, had no particular wish to share in so cumbrous a scheme which they believed to be unworkable. Gorges, of course, was aware of the opposition to it led by Bristol's two representatives in Parliament and of the Bill then before the House. At the same time, the merchants did not

(1) *Book of Trade*, fol.108.

(2) *Ibid*, fol.109.

wish to give any affront and they wanted to fish in New England waters.

The Mayor, therefore, temporized in his reply. The Society had great difficulty, he said, in coming to any definite conclusion on the subject of the letter and the articles. There were many and great difficulties to be overcome, and those of their number who were most interested in New England and best informed on the subject were absent from home. Moreover, they had understood from Sir Ferdinando's servant that he himself was shortly coming to Bristol. Also, since the matter concerned not only that city but several other towns as well, they could not, even if they had been able, give a definite answer before they had consulted with the merchants of those places. Until this subject was thoroughly gone into, they hoped that the New England Company would agree to an arrangement by which individual Bristol merchants might continue their fishing on payment of an agreed percentage of each cargo. <sup>(1)</sup>

Their real intention was to play for time in order that they might be able to find out what the other towns thought of the proposals, and also what, in fact, were the actual rights of the New England Company. Letters were sent off on October 21st, 1621, to the City's representatives in Parliament, John Whitson and John Guy, to inform them of Sir Ferdinando Gorges' propositions. Copies of the letters which they had already received, together with other documents, were enclosed, and the two Members were asked to procure a copy of the Company's patent in order to discover if, in truth, its rights and privileges were as wide as Gorges claimed them to be. If this was so, some of the merchants were willing to accept the conditions of the licences offered by him, if that was the best that they could expect, for at all costs they did not wish to lose their fishing trade. <sup>(2)</sup> This letter came to men who had already crossed swords with Sir Ferdinando Gorges, and who were well acquainted with what they considered to be the unreasonably monopolistic nature of the Council of New England.

King James I, in his desire to raise revenue outside of Parliamentary control, was unwisely lavish in the granting of monopolies. The result was that he had placed serious hindrances on the development of legitimate trade and antagonised Parliament. On the previous 2nd May, a Bill for the *Freer liberty of fishing voyages, to be made and performed in the sea-coast and places of New-found-land, Virginia, New England and*

(1) *Book of Trade*, fol.110.

(2) *Ibid*, fols. 111-112.

*other sea coasts and parts of America* had by now reached the committee stage. (1) Guy's proposal that the special right of the Newfoundland Company should still be respected, even though that body was by now to all intents and purposes defunct, was rejected. Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Sir John Bourchier, "two mercuries . . . who brought incantations in their mouthes by their elegant speeches,"

wished to monopolize the fishing, though they were prepared to allow free fishing to others under licence from them.

"When also God and nature, by right of creation, had made the sea free," the New England Company had "not one man there, in theis 70 years. They would deny liberty of wood and tymber for stages to dry fish; and to repair or make botses . . . and theis New England men will nether plant themselves, nor suffer others, neyther eate hay themselves nor suffer the laborynge oxe; like coles dog: or as bests, like my next neighbors signe of St. George, that is ever ready on horsebacke, but never rydeth forwardes, *nec movet, nec promovet.*" (2)

The Virginia Company, whose representative also spoke, favoured free fishing along the coasts, and this in spite of the fact that his organisation had done a great deal more than any other to promote colonization, and therefore might be presumed to have established a right to impose restrictions.

In spite of the storm in Parliament, the New England Company maintained its rights and granted licences as it proposed. With all its defects, it did its utmost to encourage investment and emigration. According to its letter to the Mayor of Bristol, which was undated, but which appears to have been written some time in 1622, the company did not wish to debar any subjects from fishing, so long as they conformed to the reasonable regulations made by it in the common interest, and provided also that they had previously received its licence. In order that those who wished to fish in New England waters should have no difficulty with the Company's officials, this letter, which appears to have been drawn up by Gorges at the request of his colleagues, goes on to state that the Treasurer and others resident in and about Exeter had been empowered to issue licences. This, it was hoped, would save the applicants much trouble. (3)

(1) Stock, L. F., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliament respecting North America*, Vol.1, p.30.

(2) *Ibid.* p.37-8.

(3) *Book of Trade*, fol.123.

The new Company, in fact, had a bad name, and the consequence was that both investments and emigrants were scarce. Therefore more propaganda seemed necessary. Two documents were therefore issued, entitled "Reasons showing the Benefit that may ensue to these his Masts. Realmes by settling of the Plantacon in New England, and especially to the Western ports of this Kingdom" and "Certeyne breif Reasons that are thought fitt to be propounded to the Westerne Counties to move them to the furthering of the Plantacon of New England." (1)

The first document states that the colonization of New England would enlarge the King's dominions, afford employment to many thousands of people, free the kingdom of paupers and greatly increase the navigation of the realm. It would supply a market for English goods, furnish the country with the raw materials for her manufacture, and indeed the document recited the usual mercantalist arguments in favour of plantations. A free gift of two hundred acres of land in fee was offered to everyone who adventured £12.10s., and a further one hundred at a chief rent of 5s. for each person carried out.

This document closed with a pious exhortation:

"Lastlie and aboue all the rest, by this opertynitye there is noe Countrie wthin this Realme, but by this Course hath a special occasion and meanes presented unto them to dedicate their best service to the God of Heaven and earth by endeavouring to advance his glory in seeking howe to settle the Christian ffaith in those hethenishe and Desert places in the world wch whoe shall refuse to further, lett him undergoe the blame thereof himselfe." (2)

The second document stressed still further the economic advantages of colonization. This patriotic appeal, however, had little effect upon the merchants of Bristol and the West Country generally. They were too shrewd to be taken in by such high-pressure salesmanship and share pushing, especially when it emanated from such a source as the New England Company.

Still Gorges and his friends did not despair of success, and in 1623, they decided once more to work through the King, hoping that with his royal support the people of Bristol and the West would at last take up the New England plantation with enthusiasm. In compliance with their wishes James sent a letter to the Earl of Pembroke, Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, and his Deputies of Somerset and Bristol requesting them to urge the people in that part of England to join in the New England under-

(1) *Book of Trade*, fols. 141 and 143.

(2) *Ibid.*

taking. The royal letter stated that the country was now known to be well suited for settlement, and its various advantages, both public and private were enumerated. On account of its geographical position, the West country was well placed to further this plantation, as also the part of the realm which was most likely to benefit therefrom. The Lord Lieutenant and his Deputies, therefore, were required to urge the gentry and others to bestir themselves —

“Wee hope wee shall not neede to use much persuasion in this particuler where both publique and private consideracons have soe much force, and your good affeccons soe ready to farther good works. Nevertheless wee doe expecte to receyve from you an accompte of yor proceedings, and an intimacon thereby whome you finde ready and willing, and whome not, that wee may take such notice of both as there shallbee cause.” (1)

On 14th December, Pembroke wrote to the Mayor of Bristol enclosing the royal letter, and recommended him to be active in the matter and to report what was being done, in order that when the King required it, the Lord Lieutenant would have the necessary encouraging information. (2) The King could write and threaten, and the Lord Lieutenant might exhort and order, but neither King nor Lord Lieutenant could compel the independent people of Bristol to venture their persons and fortunes in a cause which they mistrusted. The New England Company's affairs, in fact, never prospered, for the England of the early sixteen-twenties was an England whose mind was quite clear on the subject of monopolies. Bristol was prepared to be active in colonization when she could conduct the business in her own way, but she had no wish to be a mere puppet, in company with a number of other western towns, controlled by a group of powerful people. No matter how patriotic and high-minded the promoters might be, and even though one of them, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, was a distinguished Somerset magnate, whom everyone respected, Bristol refused to be coerced.

The Council for New England on 30th December 1622, issued a patent to Robert, son of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, which granted him a strip of land called “Messachustack,” extending along the sea-coast ten miles and inland thirty miles, and including within its terms all islands not previously granted within three miles of the shore. In September, 1623, he went to Weymouth or Wessagusset, a place where Weston had previously attempted to make a plantation. This was the first settlement in Massachusetts Bay

(1) *Book of Trade*, fol.144.

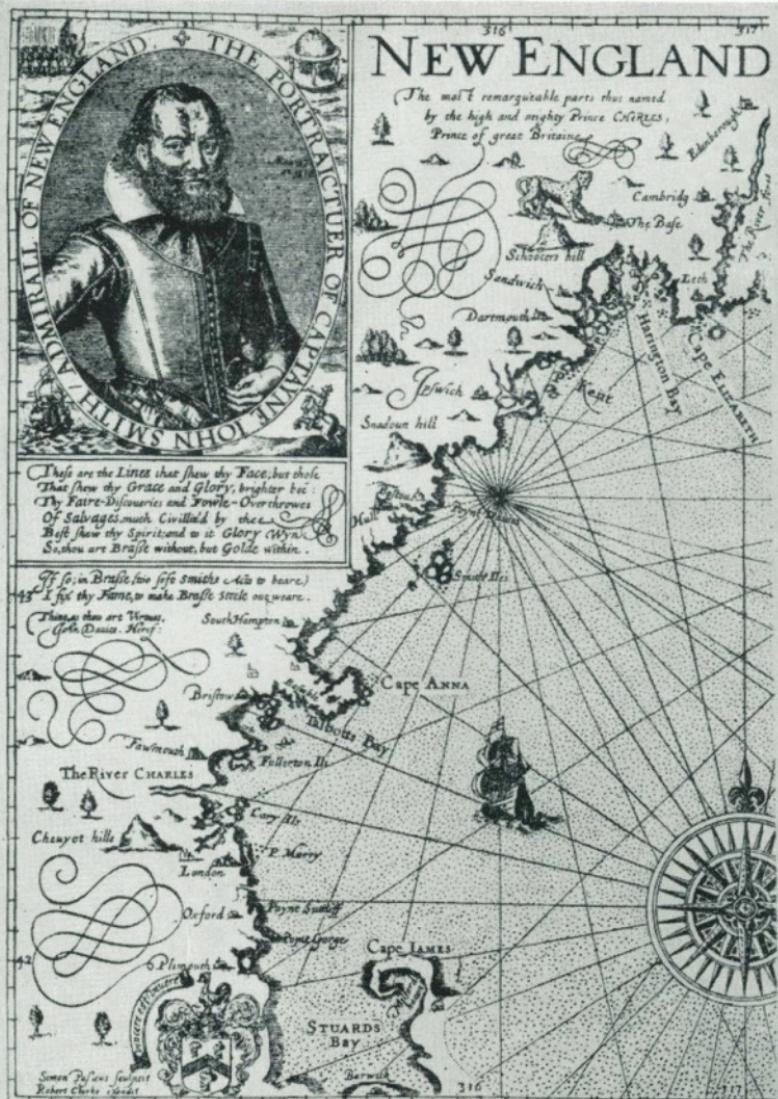
(2) *Ibid*, fol.145.

I perceivd by y<sup>e</sup> last letter sent me by y<sup>e</sup> Recd<sup>nt</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> July  
that you had sent mee from me in the forme of y<sup>e</sup> first, But  
I perceivd that it wold not be y<sup>e</sup> wisd<sup>h</sup> before this, by y<sup>e</sup> 28<sup>th</sup>  
I doubt not but you finde your faine<sup>h</sup> it is from my power  
to give you y<sup>e</sup> desire in y<sup>e</sup> manner you make to me, but  
but one of many that are interested in y<sup>e</sup> bus<sup>h</sup> —  
I am longe since past<sup>h</sup> my Accounts, but<sup>h</sup> for y<sup>e</sup> money  
you payd me, and many hundred pounds more, and by y<sup>e</sup> 29<sup>th</sup>  
Accounts and Debts all of y<sup>e</sup> for<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Com<sup>ty</sup>, and as friendly  
com<sup>dy</sup>, as y<sup>e</sup> the Acte of Parliament. But<sup>h</sup> if you say  
so more in my firs<sup>t</sup> as I shall need to trouble you now —  
for to be in y<sup>e</sup> bus<sup>h</sup>, onely of her for<sup>th</sup> you have raff<sup>ed</sup> goods  
y<sup>e</sup> self<sup>h</sup> out of so much and so exp<sup>dy</sup> fill a bus<sup>h</sup> with<sup>h</sup> y<sup>e</sup>  
it onely fit for it to w<sup>th</sup> you, y<sup>e</sup> gives y<sup>e</sup> spirit to  
b<sup>th</sup> eng<sup>th</sup> it, And seeing it is not our fortune to enjoy<sup>h</sup>  
y<sup>e</sup> company, I can but be as for<sup>th</sup> for it, as you will<sup>h</sup>  
w<sup>th</sup> you se<sup>th</sup> all understand, y<sup>e</sup> wronge you do y<sup>e</sup> self<sup>h</sup> in it  
And you for<sup>th</sup> my friends and to them y<sup>e</sup> desire  
to know<sup>h</sup> your troules, y<sup>e</sup> w<sup>th</sup> I will<sup>h</sup> w<sup>th</sup> it is fit  
for me to be, and to do<sup>th</sup> w<sup>th</sup> out<sup>h</sup> it

Y<sup>e</sup> frnd<sup>h</sup> and affec<sup>h</sup>

Ferd: Gorges

Letter from Sir Ferdinando Gorges to Sir Hugh Smyth regretting that Smyth is  
withdrawing his financial support from the New England venture. 16 July, 1623.  
Bristol Archives Office.



Part of a Map of New England.

From Captain John Smith's *Historie of Virginia* in the Lambeth Palace Library (by permission of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury)

and the second in Massachusetts. Other Bristolians also received land from the Company. In 1625 Robert Aldworth and his son-in-law, Giles Elbridge, had an agent in what is now part of the state of Maine. Elbridge had extensive fishing and trading interest on the coasts which were apparently considered to be very valuable; on 29th February, 1632, the two merchants received a grant of 1,200 acres in the Pemaquid country, and in conformity with the rules of the Company, they were to be allowed an extra hundred acres for every new settler they took there.

During 1622 and 1623, Gorges was by no means disposed to rely solely upon the support he received from the Privy Council. Throughout these years, he was unwearied in his efforts to induce his friends and relations to invest. If they supported him they would never regret it and in addition, by taking part in the foundation of a new English colony in North America, they would enlarge the reputation of their country. Despite all he said, even the patentees were slow to pay up the agreed £100 and, indeed, some of them never appear to have done so. Their interest in the council was so slight, in fact, that for some time it was impossible to hold a council meeting because there were not enough members present to form a quorum.

In a letter to Hugh Smyth of Ashton Court, dated 8th July 1623, Sir Ferdinando stated that already some of his friends had benefitted from New England, a place in which he himself had sunk considerable sums. Employment had been given to hundreds of people and between fifty and sixty ships had engaged in the trade during the previous year. On the 16th of the same month he wrote again to Smyth to remind him that he was pledged to support the Company. <sup>(1)</sup>

The fact was that Smyth shared the suspicions of the Bristol merchants about colonization as a desirable field for investment. The Virginia Company was a financial failure and in the following year its charter was rescinded. Throughout the country there was a rising wave of dissatisfaction with the Government's policy and in particular the nation was aroused against the King's financial abuses. Unfortunately for him, Gorges was by now identified in the public mind with the Court party.

When Parliament met again in 1624, the attack on the New England patent was resumed with unabated fury. Once more its special privileges were denounced. The restraints upon the fishing industry which it imposed were detrimental to the country's interest; the company had restrained by force vessels about to set sail for New England and had also seized ships in New England waters belonging to outport fishermen.

(1) *Bristol Archives Office: Ashton Court Papers C45/1/2.*

The company's defenders hotly denied these charges and in their turn attacked their opponents. The free fishermen had sold fire-arms to the Indians, they had corrupted their women, they fought with each other as well as with the company's servants and unless order was speedily established there this whole country would be lost to the foreigners. Guy and his friends demanded free trade, but they had no answer to give to the question as to how the country was to be defended from foreign invasion. Otherwise the Bristol and outport representatives were moderate enough since they now merely wished to have the objectionable fishing clauses removed. Indeed, Guy went out of his way to defend the right of the planters to participate in the New England fisheries. After much discussion, the petition to moderate Sir Ferdinando Gorges' patent was allowed and thus an essential feature of his scheme disappeared.

After the middle of 1623 the Council for New England did not meet for eight years and during that time various things occurred which rendered its position more precarious than it was in that year. By 1624, the war party, led by the future King Charles I and his friend Buckingham was in the ascendant and the control of policy was passing from the old King into their hands. James may have been a fool, as Henry IV had said, but he had the wisdom to give his country twenty years of peace.

With the approach of war Gorges' military duties made increasing calls upon his time. His military reputation stood high and as a distinguished Elizabethan soldier he was considered by some to be a man eminently suited for high command.

"I will but name him because I do not know how he stands in the favour of your Honour's gracious patron. If he will, he hath a good head-piece of his own if he employ it into good ends. The man I mean is Sir Ferdinando Gorges." (1)

But he was given no appointment and remained in his Plymouth command. He was completely disgusted with the mismanagement of the naval and military preparations and with the inefficiency that characterised the conduct of the subsequent campaign. It may well be, however, that this failure to win promotion caused him no disappointment. He blamed Buckingham for the disasters both of the Spanish and French wars, but he was not so unwise as to express his opinions too openly.

The year 1629 was an important one in Gorges' career. He married his fourth wife, who was his cousin Elizabeth, widow of his old friend Sir Hugh Smyth of Ashton Court, to whom he had so often written about the New England Council. Elizabeth's

(1) Preston, R. A., *op.cit.*, p.251.

father, Sir Thomas Gorges and her mother, the Marchioness of Northampton, had been the young Ferdinando's chief patrons when he first entered the Queen's service. His new wife was the sister of Lord Gorges, one of his principal supporters in the New England business and her son, Thomas, was his faithful friend and partner. As this marriage restored his fortunes somewhat, he was able to relinquish the Plymouth command and to devote the rest of his life to colonization. As the master of the Great House in Bristol, he now became a leading citizen of that place and spent his remaining years either at Ashton Court or the Great House.

In that same year, 1629, Charles I dissolved Parliament and began his eleven years of personal rule. Shortly after Parliament was dissolved, a powerful group of Puritans through the instrumentality of the Earl of Warwick, obtained a patent from the New England Council which enabled them to found a colony in Massachusetts. Subsequently this grant was enlarged by the King, though Gorges does not appear to have been consulted in the matter.

These Puritans were men of fortune and good family who had powerful friends in England. Not long after they received their patent, they proceeded to demonstrate their independent spirit. First, they removed themselves bodily to Massachusetts and carried their seal with them. Not content with the large grants of land they already possessed, they soon began to extend it still further. Gorges' settlers and others were driven from their lands and Massachusetts refused to recognise the rights of the New England council. Within a few years the resolute, self-righteous colonists were ready to defend what they considered to be their rights, by force, even against the King himself, and the extremists, under Endecott, cut out the cross of St. George from the ensign because they declared it was a Popish symbol. These things occurred just when Gorges was once more ready to take an active part in colonization, but when he began to prevent unauthorised ships from sailing to New England and seized others on their return and confiscated their cargoes, he aroused the bitter opposition of the men of Massachusetts. <sup>(1)</sup>

By 1629 it was clear that he could no longer expect to receive a steady income from the fisheries off the New England coast, and Gorges therefore turned to the fur trade as a substitute, but this proved to be even more disastrous. In 1631, therefore, he decided to revive the Council for New England as a land owning and governing body. He was determined that no more interlopers like the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay should be allowed

(1) *Bristol Archives Office*: Ashton Court Papers C49/3 and C48/17.

to acquire any more of the Council's territory. Grants were made to squatters already there and to various friends of Warwick and other patentees. This, as has been seen, included the extended grants made to Robert Aldworth and Giles Elbridge, merchants of Bristol, in the Pemaquid area. All of these grantees acknowledged their obligation to pay rent to the council of New England, as well as their duty to settle the area and build a town on their land. Although these grants were made beyond the frontiers of Massachusetts, the opposition of the Puritans was nonetheless implacable.

During these years Gorges spent much of his time in Bristol where he no doubt discussed with his friends among the merchants there his troubles with Massachusetts. The old abuses still went on; the New Englanders trafficked in arms with the Indians, he had trouble with a Dutch ship which he detained in Plymouth because he suspected it was intended for colonization in New England. When an agent of his landed in Bristol and reported that he had been thrown into prison by the Puritans and released only when his identity was established, Gorges and his friends thereupon reported this case of Puritan oppression, and others of a similar nature to the Privy Council. Though his petition was rejected, a body styled "the Committee for New England" was appointed in December, 1632, to investigate the origins of the Massachusetts Bay charter, but its activities were not sufficiently energetic to suit the masterful Archbishop Laud who came to power in 1633. In the following year, therefore, the Commission for Foreign Plantations, which was in fact a sub-committee of the Privy Council, was appointed. It held power direct from the King and in status was similar to the Council of the North and the Court of Star Chamber. Its function was to enforce the authority of the King in the colonies and generally to reduce them to obedience. Laud also intended that it should carry out the purposes for which the Privy Council had appointed the Committee for New England.

Like many of the most high-minded men in England at that time, Gorges now found himself in a most difficult and unhappy situation. He was by nature not anti-puritan in so far as their religious beliefs and practices were concerned. Indeed he had some sympathy for them. As a young man, he had fought for both Dutch and French Protestants, and Puritans were to be found among his close friends and relations. Even though he disagreed with much that the zealots of New England stood for and did, he was genuinely anxious to be their friend. When, therefore, they persisted in regarding him as the arch-enemy and denounced him as a hypocrite, he was both surprised and grieved. But

while he sympathized with the Puritans in some ways, he was bitterly opposed to them in others. As an Elizabethan gentleman and still more as a soldier who had faithfully served three monarchs in turn, he placed his loyalty to the Crown first among his political principles. Thus, when the New Englanders openly defied Charles, ignored his orders to return the Massachusetts charter to England, and began to fortify Boston in order to defend it against the King, he was appalled. The Ministers in Massachusetts, when asked what should be done if a "General Governor" were sent out replied that they should defend their lawful possessions if they were able. The puritan attitude was, in fact, incomprehensible to this survivor from the Elizabethan age.

He could never agree with the younger Vane who stated in a letter to his father on hearing that the Massachusetts Charter was to be rescinded:

"The effect would be to destroy the Colony and return the land to the Indians for it is not trade that God would set up in these parts but the profession of His truth, and therefore if God's ends be not followed, men's ends will never be blessed nor attained." (1)

Such men as Gorges, however, could not believe that God's ends necessarily coincided with the disloyal opinions of the people of Massachusetts. But while his views of the Puritans of New England were mixed, he had grave doubts about the wisdom of the authoritarian policy which the bigotted Archbishop was now inducing his master to adopt. Laud was determined to enforce his political and ecclesiastical doctrines throughout the King's dominions; the people of New England, as well as of old England and Scotland were to be taught the meaning of "thorough," and reduced to obedience. But if this was to be done, it was essential that all colonies should be brought directly under royal control.

Thus, Gorges and his friends were given an opportunity, of which no doubt they were only too glad to avail themselves. They had failed to raise the necessary capital for the colonization of New England and their scheme was clearly a failure. Thousands of Englishmen were now flocking to Massachusetts where they hoped to find political and religious liberty, but the New England Council was not able to make any comparable appeals to prospective emigrants. Gorges, therefore, set about the elaboration of his plan for the establishment of a Royal province.

Before the patent for New England was surrendered, however, they were careful to ensure that their own rights would be protected. On June 7th 1635, when they believed that the Massachusetts Charter was to be rescinded and that they had thus defeated

(1) Preston, R. A., *op.cit.* p.312.

their opponents in New England, Gorges and his associates resigned their patent to the King.

In due course, his loyalty was recognised, on paper at least. In 1637 he was appointed Governor of New England and two years later he was given the colony of Maine for himself. But these glittering prizes were illusory. In 1635, Mason, designated as Gorges' admiral and one of his closest friends died. This news was hailed by the Puritans as a sign of Divine favour.

“But the Lord in mercy, taking him away, all the business fell on sleep, so as ships came and brought what and whom they would without any question or control.” (1)

When later they learned that a ship which Gorges and Mason had been building to carry the new Governor out to New England had fallen to pieces they found additional proof of the continuing protection of God. They therefore felt that they could safely ignore the machinations of their enemies in England and continue to worship as they pleased and to carry on their unhampered trade.

Sir Ferdinando was now over seventy years of age, and his health was failing. In the same year that he was appointed Governor of New England he informed Thomas Smyth that owing to extreme weakness he was not able to write his letter himself, but although he could not take any food and was generally in a wretched state he assured his friend that he was otherwise well. As he had sent his own coach to Ashton, he would be grateful if Thomas would lend him his bed-coach, in order that he might

“creep home with ease and take comfort from his friends and from the fresh air of Somerset.” (2)

In addition to all of this, he was now virtually penniless and lived mainly on the bounty of his wife, but still the thought of surrendering never occurred to him, for nothing could daunt this gallant old soldier. It was appropriate that the device on his coat-of-arms should be a whirlpool. In his farewell speech to the passengers on board the ill-fated *Angel Gabriel* in Bristol harbour, on the eve of her departure, he said that —

“If he ever came there he would be a true friend unto them.” (3)

So down to the outbreak of the Civil War he went on exhorting, pleading and planning. If the King would but cover the cost of his outward passage and that of his suite, he would fend for himself in New England, but all of these efforts were in vain.

(1) Preston, R. A. *op.cit.*, p.307.

(2) *Bristol Archives Office*: Ashton Court Papers, C/49/6.

(3) Burrage, H. S., *The Beginnings of Colonization in Maine*, p.281.

Laud was attracted by his proposal to found a royal province as a counter to Massachusetts, but both he and his royal master had too many troubles on their hands at that time to bother themselves about distant colonies. The treasury was empty, Scotland was in flames and the clouds of war were gathering. Gorges was equally unsuccessful in arousing enthusiasm for his schemes among his friends, and even his devoted wife had long since ceased to believe in them.

"I must now thank you for your love and care of the old man. Saturday last his New England people set sail. God speed them well, for I have little hope of any good . . ." (1)

When war came, he and Thomas Smyth raised a troop of horse among the gentry of Somerset and Gloucestershire, but when he appeared at the gates of Bristol the Mayor refused to allow him to enter on the flimsy excuse that the King had ordered him to defend the place and had given no instructions about reinforcements. Gorges therefore retired to Wells having tried to recruit men in the Shepton Mallet area, but the response there was very unsatisfactory. A long verbose letter from the Committee in Somerset to the Houses of Parliament recounts the Royalists failure at that place. In attempting to silence a Parliamentary supporter, Sir Ralph Hopton tried to pull him off his horse . . . and Sir Ferdinando Gorges shook at him with a halberd and divers of their Cavaliers drew their swords. (2) When it is remembered that Sir Ferdinando Gorges whom the Parliamentarians regarded as being so fierce, was then a man of 77, this episode reflects little credit on the Parliamentary side.

Bristol fell, and the Royalists retired to Sherborne. Later they were obliged to quit the West Country altogether. When they reached Cardiff, Thomas Smyth died and Gorges brought his body back to Ashton. So ended his last campaign, but though his act of service was over, he was still able to assist the King in various ways. Thus in 1642 he offered the hospitality of the Great House to the King's representative, the Marquis of Hertford. He was also probably instrumental in helping Prince Rupert to recapture Bristol. In 1644 Queen Henrietta Maria was lodged in the Great House and her son, Charles, Prince of Wales, was also there in the following year. Gorges died at Ashton Court in 1647, saddened by the King's defeat, but fortunately for him he did not live to learn of the King's execution which took place two years later.

(1) Letter from Lady Gorges to her son, circa 1635.

Ashton Court MSS, quoted in Gorges, R., *Story of a Family*, p.133.

(2) *Civil War Tract*, Bristol Reference Library.

Sir Ferdinando Gorges has not always received the recognition he deserves. In his own time, he was looked upon as a failure and the historians of later centuries have tended to dismiss him as a reactionary bungler. It has often been suggested that his zeal for the glory of England was a mere mask to cover his selfish intentions. Such a view is both unfair and untrue. Quite naturally, he was anxious to see some return from his investments in colonization which had swallowed up his own resources and the dowries of his wives, but he never placed his own personal well-being above his desire to serve his country. It is true that his scheme for the government of New England was over-elaborate and unworkable, but it must be remembered that even if the design had been satisfactory, the time when the patent was granted was unfortunate for by then the first wave of interest in colonization had ebbed. Moreover, the Council for New England was identified in the public mind with the Court party and monopolistic privileges.

In the opening decades of the seventeenth century, colonization was still new to Englishmen. Everyone who put his hand to it at that time made mistakes, but like many others, Gorges learned by experience. Thus, when the Civil war broke out, he had learned a great deal and had modified his ideas considerably. The result was that at the end of his career, he had a far more realistic grasp of colonial problems than the majority of his contemporaries. In his letters to Charles I, Wyndebank, Cottington and others, as well as in his own writings, he advanced a conception of colonial relationships, well in advance of his time, that was repugnant both to Charles and to the Puritans.

He wanted to preserve the King's authority in the colonies, but he also advocated a degree of colonial autonomy that Charles and Laud could never accept. When it was suggested that Massachusetts should be abandoned because of its obstinacy and disloyalty to the King, Gorges declared that "no prince ever abandoned people or territory because of schismatic tendencies but rather sought to win them with the largest conditions of all favour and freedom." (1) If the Puritan colonies were not supported by England he believed that the people there would undoubtedly turn to foreigners for assistance. The French or the Dutch would be only too glad to give such help, for New England was known to be a valuable and desirable territory to possess.

No attempt is made here to deny that Sir Ferdinando made mistakes. Frequently he was ill-judged in his enthusiasm and like all men he had his personal defects. He was too much the old fashioned aristocrat to understand the point of view of

(1) Preston, R. A., *op.cit.*, p.315.

merchants and traders. Often in his writings appear phrases that indicate a somewhat arrogant attitude to people whose social status was below that of a gentleman. It would seem, however, that these defects have sometimes been so exaggerated that his virtues have been forgotten. He was, in fact, a moderate man though strongly Royalist by inclination. He could see both right and wrong on the King's side, as well as on that of Winthrope and his gang. The fourth decade of the seventeenth century in England, however, was not a time for moderation in Church or State. He had never been swayed, he sadly wrote in a letter to Lord Fairfax

"further than an obedient servant only careful of my Country's happiness" and that he had "been fearful to side with either party as not able to judge of so transcendent a difference but sorrowing in the highest degree to find such a separation threatening of so much the ruin of all." (1)

His lifelong devotion to the throne drew him in one way while his belief in the traditional rights of Parliament and the liberty of the subject drew him in another. Whatever his failures may have been, and however his shortcomings may be judged, no one can doubt his courage. When Englishmen began to slay each other on English soil, he was bewildered, for he had lived on into an age that he did not understand. If, at the last, he decided to stand by the King in his hour of need, he did so with a heavy heart. Falkland personified the despair of many Englishmen in that unhappy time, when, at the battle of Newbury, he rode out alone against the Parliamentary army not to fight, but to seek in death relief for his tormented spirit. This was a deed which that gallant, old Elizabethan soldier, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, could understand and approve.

(1) Preston, R. A., *op.cit.*, p.344.

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C. M. MacInnes

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